Incorporating Sustainability in Nigerian Universities and the Challenges for Sustainable Future

James Odia
Department of Accounting,
University of Benin, Nigeria.
James.odia@uniben.edu, +234-8056580011

Introduction

- World in a crisis
- Global challenges such as poverty, hunger, global warming & climate change etc on the rise
- Debates by world governments and corporations on sustainable solution

**UN Agenda 2030 - the SDG**
- A paradigm shift for development in global development framework
- 17 UN SDGs and 169 targets
- SDGs and sustainable future
Sustainability has become a major issue in the 21st Century

1: University and Sustainability

- **Sustainability in Universities**
  - Challenges present paradigm & silos
  - Call Universities to incorporate sustainability in:
    - Mission
    - Educational practices
    - Operations and activities
    - Partnership and engagements
    - curricula

- **Sustainability challenges University to**
  - Go beyond integration in curriculum
  - Sustainability action projects
  - Interdisciplinary, participatory pedagogies, researches
  - Open institutional boundaries
  - Sustainable communities
  - Redefine existing relationships
  - Create sustainability mindsets: Know, Do, Be

1.1. Sustainability (global) Mindsets and SDGs

**Why Universities for SDG ?**

- Create and deconstruct paradigms
- Educate, provide knowledge and skills for intellectuals, leaders, innovators and future leaders and decision makers
- Re-align its activities with critical reflexive paradigm to support the construction of more sustainable future
- Educate public and other sectors on SDGS
- Provide social and technical solutions to SDG

**SDG Benefits to universities**

- New integrated way to show contribution or impact
- New form of collaborations with stakeholders
- Access new funding streams
- Responsible University of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century – to solving global challenges
- Exchange and collaboration programmes; South-South and North-South partnership
- Need for SDG-related education- ESD
1.2. Education for Sustainability Development

- Indispensable and precursor of SDG 4 to all SDGs
- Growing global recognition
- A key enabler of more just, inclusive and resilient societies
- Progressive pedagogies; 21st Century skills, knowledge and competencies
- Critical thinking, scenario planning, collaboration decision making, problem solving
- Better and sustainable future for all
1.2. **UNIVERSITIES AND EDS**

- Strengthen ESD knowledge and develop innovative approaches
- The UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), & university’s engagements:
  - Education, Research, Governance and Operations; External Leadership
  - Transformation and social change agent
  - Create sustainable mindset for a sustainable future

**DIMENSIONS**

- Integrate sustainability into the curriculum
- Sustainable campus

**Critical Factors**: Political will, Leadership & Management, etc
2.0. Nigeria and the SDGs

- Nigeria Signed into Agenda 2030 in 2015
- National Voluntary Reviews of 2017 and SDG Implementation of ‘No one is left behind’
  - Mainstreaming the SDGs into national development plans, policies, budgets
  - National Economic and Recovery Growth Plan
  - ESD in Nigerian Universities not a real priority
  - Lack of political will and commitments by government

- Education and Society we want
  - National Education policy - Latest review of 2013 does not capture the SDGs
- Implications for learning, teaching and research
## 2.1. Nigerian Universities and ESD

### Composition of Nigerian universities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Establishment</th>
<th>Federal Universities</th>
<th>State Universities</th>
<th>Private Universities</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1940-1949</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950-1959</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960-1969</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-1979</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-1989</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-1999</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2009</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2019</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.2. Sustainability in Nigerian Universities
No framework/model; low contents & knowledge, uncoordinated practices,

- **Mission**
  - Teaching-
  - Research-
  - Community services

- **Courses/Programmes**
  - Undergraduate:
    - No stand alone sustainability course in universities
    - Students receptivity, low SDGs knowledge
  - Post graduate:
    - Only few universities offer full courses in sustainability, except UN-backed programmes
    - Low SDGs contents

- **Curriculum design and contents**
  - NUC Benchmark Minimum Academic Standard (BMAS)
  - Out-dated & needs revision
  - Imbalance in economic, social & environment issues
  - Not link to real world & SDGs
  - Not enough knowledge, skills, values to respond

- **Campus operations**

- **Partnerships & Social inclusion**
2.3. ESD Transition: Learning and Teaching

**Moving from (Our Universities)**
- Seeing people as problem
- Passing on knowledge and awareness
- Negative problem solving approach
- Isolated change and action
- Accumulated knowledge or certification only

**Moving towards**
- People seen as change agent
- Questioning and getting to the root cause of issues
- Constructive creation of alternative future
- *Learning for change*
- Acquiring knowledge and skill to solve societal problems
2.4. ESD Transition: Researches

**Shift from (Our Universities)**
- Research disciplined-based
- Research with academic impacts
- Researches that inform
- Research on technologies and behaviour change
- Research on people
- Researchers as experts

**Shift to**
- Inter/trans/multidisciplinary researches, sustainability science
- Social impacts/ total change
- Researches that transform
- Focus on social / structural change
- Research with people
- Researchers as partners
2.5. Challenges of ESD in Nigerian Universities

- Traditional conservative curricula / discipline-based learning
- Difficulty in integrating sustainability into curriculum and teaching
- Culture of indifference
- Lack of understanding of ESD
- No orientation of sustainable university model - governance and operation
- Lack of institutional and top management support
- Few and Insufficient support for teaching staffs
- Many Nigerian universities have not signed into the SDG accords, HEI declarations and UN PRME
- Lack of political will
2.6. Consequences of lack of Sustainability integration

- **Nigerian Universities**
  - Lose of Relevance, reputation and ranking
  - Continuous Detachment and disconnection from societies
  - Little contribution to SDGs, Societies and national development
  - Not agent of social change and solutions for SDGs

- **Country and Global implications**
  - Poor Performances in the SDGs
  - Unable to meet Agenda 2030 in a decade’s time
  - More worsening poverty, hunger & inequalities,
  - Governance & human rights ( #Endsars),
  - Unsustainable Consumption & production, more damage to ecosystem
  - Climate change deterioration
3.0. Introducing Sustainability into the Curriculum

**Challenges**

- Slow & complex process
- Lack of systematic approach
- Resistance to change
- Lack of motivation/understanding
- Leadership/capacity
- Other priorities-commercial orientation etc
- Culture and value
- Education policy and frameworks: NUC minimum benchmark
- Building and sustaining the sustainability mindset

**Motivations**

- Teacher’s attitude, training/research interests
- Industry’s influence
- Professional bodies
- Employer/students demands
- Education policy/curriculum
- UN-MESA/UN-DESD, UNSD Networks
- UN PRME
- Government’s consciousness and support
- Capital market requirements.
3.1. **Models and Approaches of Integration into Curriculum**

**Common models/approaches**
- Functional: partnering with departments, and businesses
- Interpretive: cross-campus or campus-wide initiative
- Complex: extends to the broader community
- Integrative-holistic: embraces curriculum, campus, community and research

**Implementation**
- Integrate into existing courses or programmes: Method used in most Nigeria universities
- Create new disciplines, specific sustainability courses/programmes
- Integrate into core common requirements
- Create new cross disciplinary sustainability courses/programme
3.2. Processes of integrating sustainability

Different approaches by universities?

- Assessment,
- Mapping,
- Build capacity, & competencies
- Gap analysis,
- Integrate SDG
- Monitor, evaluate
4.0. Conclusion

Based on the implications on realizing the SDGs

- Urgent revision of the national educational policy/curriculum framework
- Government support
- Paradigm change in Nigerian universities
- Nigerian Universities should shift from the traditional to sustainability model in:
  - Learning and teaching
  - Researches (trans/interdisciplinary, evidenced and impact-based and cross-cutting)
  - Leadership and Governance, culture and Operations in universities’ campuses
  - Broader (internal/external) partnerships and engagements
- Universities should sign into UNGC, PRME & other HEI declarations on sustainability
4.0. Conclusion cont.

- North-South exchanges, collaborations and support
- Capacity building and support for teachers and researchers in sustainability for effectiveness
- Integrate sustainability in curriculum as core or strengthen sustainability contents and mindsets
THANK YOU FOR LISTENING